DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 085 799 CS 500 537

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TITLE Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Language and General Semantics.
PUB DATE May 73
NOTE 21p.; Special research conducted in the Department of Philosophy, Tuskegee Institute

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); Existentialism; Expressive Language; *Language; *Language Research; *Linguistics; Nonverbal Communication; Philosophy; *Semantics; Semiotics; *Speech; Structural Linguistics; Verbal Communication
IDENTIFIERS Merleau Ponty (Maurice); *Phenomenology

ABSTRACT

A survey of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's views on the phenomenology of language yields insight into the basic semiotic nature of language. Merleau-ponty's conceptions stand in opposition to Saussure's linguistic postulations and Korzybski's scientism. That is, if language is studied phenomenologically, the acts of speech and gesture take on greater importance than language as currently viewed in structural linguistics and general semantics. Merleau-Ponty stressed the "meaning" or "signification" aspects of language and postulated a theory of linguistic signs which suggests that "language is gesture." This approach allows the expressive qualities of the communicational act to become apparent, since it considers both nonverbal and verbal communication. Thus, the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty has much to contribute to the study of language. (CH)

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MERLEAU-PONTY'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF LANGUAGE AND GENERAL SEMANTICS

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The main purpose of this investigation is to present Merleau-Ponty's views on the phenomenology of language. Since the student of general semantics will readily perceive the similarities between some of Merleau-Ponty's views on language and thought and those of general semantics, the concluding section of this investigation will emphasize some of the sharp differences between the two approaches.

Since Merleau-Ponty's death on May 3, 1961, a posthumous book has been published, Le Visible et l'invisible, which reveals important changes in his philosophy. The book is incomplete. In several notes following the completed part of the book, Merleau-Ponty explicitly criticizes some of his former points of view. The changes, however, do not have the character of a radical break. But some central points of view, which formerly were presented as conclusions, have now become the starting point of a deeper reflection. The notes make clear that Merleau-Ponty was in the process of revising his own philosophy of language, and he had not yet achieved this revision. In Le Visible et l'invisible he consistently sets himself in opposition to a philosophy of language which he indicates with terms such as "positivism of language", "linguistic analysis", or "analytic thought". It should be made clear that our investigation will not deal with these later developments of Merleau-Ponty's approach to language.

LANGUAGE AND SPEECH

What is perhaps the most fundamental notion in Merleau-Ponty's approach to language is his awareness of the inadequacy of linguistic theories which

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consider language as an object of scientific investigation in opposition to language understood as essentially interwoven with thought, meaning, and more specifically the speaking subject. Linguists have sought to introduce the kind of scientific rigor found in physical and physiological sciences into their studies by severely limiting the role of meaning, that is, by excluding as far as possible any reference to the user of language, the speaking subject. "There is no analysis capable of making language crystal clear and arraying it before us as if it were an object." (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 391). Language, according to Merleau-Ponty, is much more than an object of thought, and his criticisms of the scientific attitude are thrust against the linguistic theses of Ferdinand de Saussure, in particular. (Merleau-Ponty 1964, pp. 39-41, 81, 89, etc).

Saussure makes two important pre-investigative decisions which delimit his field of inquiry. It is to these decisions that Merleau-Ponty's basic critique is addressed. In the first place, Saussure distinguished language from speech; secondly, he chose language rather than speech as the primary object of his inquiry. Saussure subordinated speech to language. In this view, language becomes something objectified, something logically structured, and something in-itself independent of the field of our experience. Speech, on the contrary, remains entirely at the disposal of our situation, and is constantly being altered and modified by many subjective factors such as our intentions, our psychological moods, and even to an extent the person with whom we are speaking. Mikel Dufrenne described this distinction between language and speech as follows: "Speech is a particular and contingent event, bound to the individual organism. Its meaning too, depends upon the intention of an individual consciousness. On the other hand, a given language is a positive object, relatively stable and independent of particular circumstances which I can find in dictionaries and grammars." (Dufrenne 1963, p. 21).

Language, then, according to Saussure, is a kind of idea object over against which the subject stands opposed and which is subject to positivistic methods of investigation. Whereas speech is seen as a concrete event inseparably bound up with the totality of our experience, language is understood as an abstract linguistic system altogether independent of our acts of speaking. Merleau-Ponty wants to replace structural linguistics with a phenemenology of human speaking, and to emphasize the importance of semantics, that is to say, he wants to emphasize the significant relationship between language and meaning.

What Merleau-Ponty sees as altogether essential in our understanding of language is not, as the scientist would have it, the establishment of a universal and timeless framework of linguistic signs governed rigidly by syntactical rules; it is rather "a return to the speaking subject, to my contact with the language I am speaking". By thematizing his study of language in the way in which he did, Saussure avoided every non-linguistic factor which could and does influence our speaking. Yet it is precisely this concrete act of speech that, according to Merleau-Ponty, takes us to the heart of the problem. We must make a return from a static, objective language to the experience of the spoken word.

LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

As an existential phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty treats thought and objective language as two manifestations of that fundamental activity whereby man projects himself towards a world. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 190-191). The essential point here being stressed by Merleau-Ponty is that language involves our total being-in-the-world, that it cannot simply be reduced to something altogether contingent on thought. This dialectic which Merleau-Ponty sets up between language and thought is of the utmost

importance for his phenomenology of language. The central point of his reflexions is the nature of this relationship, and it is in this light that he develops his own notion of thought as incarnated in language. "The link between the word and its living significance", he wrote, "is not an external link of association, the meaning inhabits the word, and language is not an external accompaniment to intellectual processes." Speech, then, is one of man's most primordial contacts with existence, for since meaning is embodied in the word, language contains within itself much more than a notional significance. We can recognize, on the other hand, a "gestural" or "existential" significance in speech. "Language certainly has an inner content, but this is not self-subsistent and self-conscious thought. What then does language express, if it does not express thoughts? It presents, or rather it IS the subject's taking up of a position in the world of his meanings." (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 193).

SPEECH AS GESTURE

Speech, understood as a gesture, orients man to his world and brings about both for the speaking subject and for his listeners, a certain coordination of experience, a certain modulation of existence, exactly as a pattern of my bodily behavior endows the objects around me with a certain significance both for me and for others. Speech, in other words, guides our directedness upon the world, and opens us at once to the world's rich significances. "We must therefore recognize as an ultimate fact this open and indefinite power to give significance--that is, both of apprehending and conveying a meaning--by which man transcends himself towards a new form of behavior, or towards other people, or towards his own thought, through his body and his speech". (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 194).

Authentic speech issues forth form an authentic relation with the world and with others, and it discloses his existence to man as an open experience, and that he is at the same time a meaning-giving, meaning-accepting being.

EXPRESSION AND MEANING

We want at this point to refine the relationship which Merleau-Ponty establishes between speech and the body by considering what he means by a gesture. Language was described above as embodying a "gestural or existential significance." Merleau-Ponty extends this idea and identifies the spoken word with a gesture, and on a more abstract level, Merleau-Ponty identifies the gesture with expression: the former is not merely an accidental sign of the latter. As such, we do not comprehend the meaning of the gesture cognitively. Rather, the meaning of the gesture comes through to us in a pre-reflective way. What Merleau-Ponty wants to stress is that there is no need to reflectively interpret a sign of anger, for instance, to understand the meaning of the sign. There is no division between the outward signs of anger and anger itself. We do not perceive anger hidden behind the angry gesture. On the contrary, "the gesture does not make me think of anger, it is anger itself". We conceive the meaning of an angry act, but not by a cognitive operation. ". . . I do not understand the gesture of others by some act of intellectual interpretation: communication between consciousnesses is not based on the common meaning of their respective experiences, for it is equally the basis of that meaning. The act by which I lend myself to the spectacle must be recognized as irreducible to anything else. I join it in a kind of blind recognition which precedes the intellectual working out and clarification of the meaning." (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 185).

Just as the gesture communicates itself directly and is read without representation or deciphering, so my spoken intention communicates itself and is read by the other person who "catches" it or takes it up.

It is easy to accept the fact that emotion is directly readable in the gesture that manifest it, for example, we smile when we are happy, clench our fists when angry, etc. But while these gestures are "natural" signs of emotions, the word is essentially regarded as a "conventional" and somewhat arbitrary sign of thought. The existence of a number of languages support this. Merleau-Ponty, however, rejects such a distinction between natural and conventional because of his conception of the interpretation of the natural and the human. Approaching this problem from the genetic perspective, "we need, then, seek the first attempts at language in the emotional gesticulations whereby man superimposes on the given world and the world according to man." Such a seeking, Merleau-Ponty feels, would take one behind conventions, mechanical laws for phonetics, etc., to an original--if reduced system of expression that would, for example, "make it not entirely arbitrary if we designate night by the word "nuit", to use "lumiere" for "light". (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 187). Furthermore, if the seeming arbitrary character of language is not really arbitrary, the natural character of emotion is not necessarily consistent either, as social psychologists and anthropologists have abundantly shown. We are reminded that, for example, Japanese smile in anger. Thus in this "emotional gesturing" there lies the basis for a variety of linguistic 'styles', a diversity of languages. This leads Merleau-Ponty to say that "behavior creates meanings. . .speech is merely one particular case of it."

GESTURE AND MEANING

To underscore the nature of thought as following after the pre-reflectively comprehended meaning of the gesture, Merleau-Ponty reminds us of the fact that long before the philosopher made the intellectual significance of sexual gestures clear and transparent, for centuries successive generations have understood them by performing them. The gesture and its meaning are not two opposed realities. They are both interwoven with each other, and neither can be reduced to the other. Merleau-Ponty described this dialectic relationship in this way: "The meaning of a gesture thus 'understood' is not behind it, it is intermingled with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture, and which I take up on my own account. It is arrayed all over the gesture itself. . ." (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 186).

Every behavior, therefore, constitutes a sense and expresses it. Along with this behavior, expression proves to be present, and this expression is not preceded by an explicit and reflexive thought. To amplify and illustrate his theses that expression and gesture come into being simultaneously and are inseparable from one another, that the gesture does not merely translate some kind of status independent of the gesture, Merleau-Ponty considers an example of artistic expression. The musical meaning of a sonata, for instance, cannot be seperated from those sounds which are its vehicle. No analysis is capable of letting us anticipate how the sonata will sound, and once the performance has been completed, intellectual analyses can do no more than carry us back to the moment of experiencing it: "During the performance, the notes are not only the 'signs' of the sonata, but it is there through them, it enters into them. . .The meaning swallows up the signs". (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 183). Expression

then does not merely signify meaning; it is meaning. The gesture is not a mere sign of some signification; it is rather the embodiment of this meaning.

LANGUAGE, THOUGHT AND WORDS

We have attempted to describe Merleau-Ponty's understanding of gestural meaning because it is against this background that he works out his fundamental thesis concerning the relationship between language and thought. Language is in the first place a gesture, "like all the rest of them", and as such it too delineates its own inherent meaning. Every word incorporates within itself the meaning--in this case, it is thought--and language in general ought not to be conceived as a mirroring or an accidental translation of a thought, already determined. Merleau-Ponty is opposed to the philosophical position which submits that the relation between the word and its meaning is an accidental one. This latter thesis presupposes that words in their function as signs, are attached to thought conventionally and arbitrarily, that is to say, although emotional gestures--the smile, for example--really has in it "the rhythm of action and the mode of being in the world which are joy itself", verbal expressions contain no such incarnation of what they signify, a fact which is demonstrated by the existence of a number of different languages, as we have already observed. "And was not the communication of the elements of language between the 'first man to speak' and the second necessarily of an entirely different kind from communication to gesture? This is what is commonly expressed by saying that gesture or emotional pantomine are 'natural signs', and the word a 'natural conventional'". (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 187).

Just as the intellectual understanding of the musical sonata was founded on the musical experience, so too, according to Merleau-Ponty, conventional usages of language is a "late form of relationship between men; they presuppose an earlier means of communication, and language must be put back into the current of intercourse." Underneath the conceptually determinate meaning of words, an existential gestural sense inhibits the word. Put in another way, we may perhaps say that vocabulary, syntactics, and the "rationalizations of grammarians", are grounded in an original form of semantics and the peculiar system of expression. Conceptual significations then presuppose an existential signification; but one which is not indicated by the words, but rather which dwells in them and from which it cannot be divorced. (This is a point that has been neglected by the General Semanticists). Merleau-Ponty is laying stress on man's primordial relation to his world and his essential habitation in the lebenswelt, the life-world of existing person, the ultimate horizon of life as it is lived by you and me in our everyday existance. There does not exist one universal, unchanging thought pattern which finds accidental expression in the multiplication of foreign tongues such that perfect translations could be rendered from one language into another. On the contrary, our language itself makes thought determinate while at the same time remaining determinable by thought.

To shed light on these ideas, Merleau-Ponty describes the priority he has given to our lived contact with the language we speak. The following quotation is quite long, but we want to give it in its entirety because it is an excellent and compressed description of the significance which Merleau-Ponty attributes to our existential, lived immersion in the

language which is our own: "The predominance of vowels in one language or of consonants in another, and constructional and syntactical systems, do not represent so many arbitrary conventions for the expression of one and the same idea, but several ways for the HUMAN BODY TO SING THE WORLD'S PRAISES AND IN THE LAST RESORT LIVE IT. Hence the FULL meaning of a language is never translatable into another. We may speak several languages, but one of them always remains the one in which we live. In order completely to assimilate a language, it would be necessary to make the world which it expresses ones own, and one never does belong to two worlds at once. If there is such a thing as universal thought, it is achieved by taking up the effort toward expression and communication in ONE single language, and accepting all its ambiguities, all the suggestions and overtones of meaning of which a linguistic tradition is made up, and which are the exact measure of its power of expression. A conventional algorism--which moreover is meaningful only in relation to language--will never express anything but nature without man. Strictly speaking, therefore, there, are no conventional signs standing as the simple notation of a thought pure and clear in itself, there are only words into which the history of a whole language is compressed, and which effect communication with no absolute guarantee, dogged as they are by incredible linguistic hazzards." (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 187-88).

Language thus communicates no meaning or meanings over and beyond itself since its meaning is inseparable from itself. The meaning of speech is precisely that which finds its bodily incarnation in the spoken word. As a consequence, thought cannot be understood as a selfsubsistent entity altogether independent of the act of speaking.

We sant at this point, therefore, to delineate more precisely this peculiar relation between language and thought. It is in this regard that Merleau-Ponty finds himself most at odds with his heritage, for according to him, the thesis can no longer be upheld which maintains that speech is a mere reflection of thought, that the mode of being which speech possesses is constituted for it by an absolute independent thinking ego. Whereas the tradition of psychology and philosophy conceived speech in terms of an external accompainment or in terms of a simple translation of thought, that is as nothing more than a tool, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis have radically transformed the notion of language by giving to it an existential importance of its own. The hard and fast cleavage between the signifying and the signified has now to be abandoned in favor of the idea that the signified comes into being simultaneously with the expressive act of the signifying.

Language is not just an exterior vestment, but an embodiment of thought. The latter cannot exist without some kind of embodiment or incarnation. It is true, we can think inwardly, but this thinking also utilizes words. It is the so-called inner or mental words which is derived from the external word. We must abandon the Cartesian illusion that thought is something essentially interior and inaccessible, and that communication through words is a secondary and accidental phenomenon. (John Dewey has well seen that psychic events have language for one of their conditions. "It is altogether likely that the "ideas" which Hume found in constant flux whenever he looked within himself were a succession of words silently uttered").

Language, according to Merleau-Ponty, retains a more primordial function. This is not to say that language totally constitutes thought. On the contrary, language detrmines thought as thought determines language.

Instead of mirroring an already determinate thought, the art of speaking helps to bring an amorphous thought into sharper outline; it helps to organize thought; and it helps thereby the speaking subject to more fully understand it. "It is in the actual practice of speaking", Merleau-Ponty wrote, "that I learn to understand". A thought can never be adequately known until "we all have the experience of its presence in the flesh of speech". (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 91). Speech, therefore, must develop thought; it must be thought's expression; it must carry its meaning within it by arranging and re-arranging this meaning: "I say that I know an idea when the power to organize discourses which makes coherent sense around it has been established in me; and this power itself does not depend upon my having acquired a certain style of thinking. I say that a signification is acquired and henceforth available when I have succeeded in making it dwell in a speech apparatus which was not originally destined for it." (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 91). (In his later work, Signs, he even spoke more forcibly of the reciprocity of thought and speech which each "puts out a branch into the other" (MP Signs 1964, p. 18).).

SPEECH, THE CULMINATION OF THOUGHT

Merleau-Ponty observed that "thought seeks the word as its completion". Thd idea that thought becomes itself in speech in concordant with the deeper essence of man. Man is embodied consciousness. The body is not a kind of living quarter for a spirit living a life all of its own.. Just as the person comes into full existence through embodiment, incarnation, so does the thought; the idea exists in the word. Therefore, says Merleau-Ponty, "the domination of objects does not follow upon recognition, but is this recognition itself...For the child, the thing is not known un-

til it is named, the name is the essence of the thing, and resides in it on the same footing as color and form". As long as we are seeking the name of someone or something, we are seeking the reality itself. The "word" does not point to a reality which already existed for us before it was named, but on the contrary it makes this reality exist for us. To speak, to name, is to bring to light.

So Merleau-Ponty denies to thought any mode of existence independent of speech and puts forth his own thesis that speech is the culmination of all thought. This is why thought tends toward its expression as toward its completion. Indeed, if speech did in fact presuppose thought, we would not be able to understand". . . why the most familiar thing appears indeterminate as long as we have not recalled its name, why the thinking subject himself is in a king of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken and written them, as is shown by the example of so many writers who begin a book without knowing exactly what they are going to put into it. A thought limited to existence for itself, independently of the constraints of speech and communication, would no sooner appear than it would sink into the unconscious, which means that it would not exist even for itself". (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 177).

Discourse, then, is understood as the working out and cultivation of thought. And it is not until a thing has been named or an idea uttered that it will become present to us, which is to say, that is not until our thoughts have been verbally expressed that we can claim them for our own. Thoughts and speech are, therefore, parts of the same experience; we know an object only after having named it. As we have seen Merleau-Ponty maintains that the denomination of objects does not follow upon recognition; it is itself recognition. "The word bears the meaning, and by imposing it

on the object, I am conscious of reaching that object". The word "bears" its meaning in a manner analogous to the way the emotional gesture and the musical sonata bore their characteristic significations. The word is not a sign, an indicator pointing to something beyond itself. Rather the word is the very incarnation of existing thoughts. Merleau-Ponty concludes that the word ". . .far from being the mere sign of objects and meanings, inhibits things and is the vehicle of meanings. Thus speech, in the speaker, does not translate ready-made thought, but accomplishes it. A fortiori must it be recognized that the listener receives thought from speech itself. . . .There is thus, either in the man who listens or reads, or in the one who speaks or writes, a thought in speech the existence of which is unsuspected by intellectualism". (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 178-9).

The phenomenon of thought inhabiting speech, of speech carrying thought toward its fulfillment, leads Merleau-Ponty to consider the example of an orator and his listening audience. The orator does not articulate his speech under the direction of a pre-fabricated thought. He neither thinks out his discourse before delivering it, nor reflectively formulates his thoughts while speaking: "His speech is his thought." In the same way, the listener does not conceptualize during the presentation of the speech. Only when the speech has been completed can the listener apply conceptual categories to what has been said. "The words fully occupy our minds." "We have no thought marginal to the text itself".

Merleau-Ponty took this question up again in his essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence", (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 39-83), and there offered his own existential description of the phenomenon of speech: "For the speaker no less than for the listener, language is definitely something other than a

technique for ciphering or deciphering ready-made significations. Before there can be such ready-made significations, language must first make significations exist as guideposts by establishing them at the intersection of linguistic gestures as that which, by common consent, the gestures reveal. Our analyses of thought give us the impression that before it finds the words which express it, it is already a sort of ideal text that our sentences attempt to translate. But the author himself has no text to which he can compare his writing, and no language prior to language, his speech satisfies him only because it reaches an equilibrium whose conditions his speech itself defines, and attains a state of prefection which has no model". (Merleau-Ponty 1964, pp. 42-3).

Language, therefore, is not the deciphering or mirroring of an original text. In the above passage, it is clear that the thought of the orator assumes a more determinate form precisely because it is verbally explained, and as a consequence the orator himself arrived at a clearer understanding of his thought in and through his verbal expression. (Kwant 1963, p. 51).

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language remains in the vanguard of the comtemport interest in language, speech, and their interrelations to and inseparableness from thought and meaning. This question of language is given such a central position in his works precisely because language is man's most basic means of correspondence with the world and with other beings. Speech gives the world to man, and man to his world. The following concluding citation is of special interest, for it makes clear what Merleau-Ponty was about in his interrogation into the nature, the function, and the being of the phenomenon of human speech: "Language is much more like a sort of being than a means, and that is why it can present something to us so well. A friend's speech over the telephone brings us the friend himself,

as if he were wholly present in that manner of calling and saying goodbye to us, of beginning and ending his sentences, and of carrying on the conversation through things left unsaid. Because meaning is the total movement of speech, our thought crawls along in language. Yet for the same reason, our thought moves through language as a gesture goes beyond the individual points of its passage. At the very moment language fills our minds up to the top without leaving the smallest place for thought not taken into its vibration, and exactly to the extent we abandon ourselves to it, it passes beyond the 'signs' toward their meaining. And nothing separates us from that meaning any more. Language does not presuppose its table of correspondence; it unveils its secrets itself. It teaches them to every child that comes into the world. It is entirely 'monstration'. Its opaqueness, its obstinate reference to itself, and its turning power; for it in turn becomes something like a universe, and it is capable of loding things themselves in this universe--after it has transformed them into their meaning". (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 43).

In this concluding section of our investigation we will contrast briefly Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to language and thought with that of general semantics. In spite of a few superficial and coincidental similarities, it is very clear that the two approaches exhibit shapr differences, stemming from radically different premises. Their "style" of thinking as well as their central originating intuition differ radically. General semantics, has some affinity with neo-positivism, not so much in terms of specific doctrines, but in terms of its fundamental outlook and aspirations, whereas existential phenomenology rejects every form of positivism.

For Merleau-Ponty, language possesses the power of bringing the thing expressed into existence, "of opening up to thought new ways, new dimensions, and new landscapes." (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 401). But this power is, in the last analysis, is obscure for the adult as for the child. Language is revelatory of being and existence. If we would grasp fully the meaning of language we must penetrate to its experiential foundation.

Our body, to the extent that it moves itself about, that is, to the extent that it is inseparable from a view of the world, is the condition of possibility of all expressive operations and all acquired views which constitute the cultural world.

Can we afford to ignore the fact that individual things emerge and become meaningful through words? Words bring to light. According to Merleau-Ponty, to know the world means to sing of it in a melody of words. We learn how to use words for things through intersubjective communication. In doing so, we approach things in a <u>new</u> way and they begin to exist for us in a new clearness. The word presupposes the thing, but we say that to name a thing does not leave the thing undisturbed altogether.

Speech, according to Merleau-Ponty, is that "paradoxical operation which by using words of a given sense, and already available meanings, we try to follow up an intention which necessarily outstrips, modifies . . . and stabilizes the meanings of words which translated it". Constituted language plays "the same limited role in the work of expression as do colours in painting. Had we not eyes or more generally senses, there would be no painting at all for us, yet the picture "tells" us more than the mere use of our senses can ever do. The picture over and above the sense-data, speech over and above linguistic data must, therefore, in

themselves posses a signifying virtue, independently of any meaning that exists for itself, in the mind of the spectator or listener. In the painter or the speaking subject, picture and utterance respectively do not illustrate a ready-made thought their own."

This is why Merleau-Ponty has been led to distinguish between a "secondary speech", which brings it into existence, in the first place for ourselves, and then for others. Now all words which have become mere signs for a univocal thought have been able to do so only because they have first of all functioned as "originating words". "We are invited to discern beneath thinking which basks into its acquisitions, and offers merely a brief-resting place in the unending process of expression, another thought which is struggling to establish itself, and succeeds only by bending the resources of constituted language to some fresh usage". This operation, according to Merleau-Ponty, must be considered an ultimate fact, since any explanation of it, for instance, the emiricist which reduces new meanings to given ones, would amount to a denial of it.

The word is a phenomenon with two primary dimensions. There is the word as institution, established both as the accumulated past in an individual experience and as a cultural deposit. Second, and more important, is the activity of expression, ie., speech. Here, Merleau-ponty specifically means the expressing that formulates meaning for the first time, "that of the child uttering its first word, of the lover revealing his feelings. . .of the writer and philosopher who re-awaken primordial experiences." By comprehending the verbal behavior in terms of these structures Merleau-Ponty institutes the genetic perspective

and situates the accomplishment of verbal meaning outside the person in his relations with things and other persons. This second dimension of the word is neglected, it would seem, by general semanticists.

Korzybski's fundamental thesis is that science provides us with an "extensional" orientation and discloses to us the "real" structure of the world. The meaning of words and signs in general are found in responses of the nervous system, the so called "semantic reactions". According to Korzybski, semantic reactions are typically "abstractions". The world of common sense objects is an "abstraction" with respect to the "real" events of the microscopic level. This process of abstraction continues as we pass from the common sense object to its name. Therefore the meaning of any abstra-tion is to be discovered by back-tracking to the pre-symbolic level of "scientific" reality. There is thus a tendency to attribute to spatio-temporal "facts" a privileged position. As Barone expressed it, there is "present the conviction of the priviledged position of spatio-temporal "facts" in the determination of meaningful language and, by consequence, an aversion of scientific cast for the discussion of the clarification of meanings where demonstrative definitions cannot be given". (Barone in Hayden and Alworth 1965, p. 385).

Korzybski, and general semanticsts in general, accept what Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, called the "natural attitude", which leads to the conviction that knowledge is simply the passive mirroring of "reality" and to the conviction that physical science is <u>the</u> system of objective mirrorings. Phenomenology rejects the natural attitudes. This rejection has led to the frequent accusation that existential phenomenologists are "against" science. The truth is that Merleau-Ponty

does not distrust the sciences, but he does distrust the phiosopy which far too often is concealed behind them. What he attacks is not the sciences but scientism, the unscientific attitude of making science the ultimate source and goal of knowledge and life. If he opposes the philosophical interpretation which the sciences make of themselves, he is most open to the findings of science, and he considers the relation of science and philosophy to be one of "reciprocal envelopment". (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 102).

As the human sciences evolve, Merleau-Ponty felt that they tend to be freed from the scientistic or positivistic postulates which perhaps favored their beginning, but which today would retard their development. Much of The Structure Of Behavior, the Phenomenology Of Perception, as well as the posthumous Le Visible et l'invisible were geared to the task of discovering the inadequacies of the philosophy underlying the sciences.

Merleau-Ponty's criticism of Korzybski and other general semanticists would be that is a "naturalist" theory, which accepts the superiority and casual control of the physical phenomena over the "psychical" or mental phenomena. To Merleau-Ponty this attempt to make the mental phenomena dependent on physical causes would be a remnant of an unphilosophical realism, with the resulting subject-object dichotomy. "In trying to describe the phenomenon of speech and the specific act of meaning we shall have the opportunity to leave behind us, once and for all, the traditional subject-object dichotomy."

Ultimately, for the general semanticist, the "real" world is the physical world as science conceives it.

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